

Stet

Independent Writers of Chicago

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LITTLE-KNOWN TREASURES THAT YOU CAN USE RIGHT NOW TO IMPROVE YOUR WORK & YOUR LIFE

What's on Your Wish List? There's an App for That!

There are literally hundreds of thousands of websites and applications that *might* help us in our work and networking (read **finding clients**). Some are wonderfully useful, while others don't fill the bill at all. You could waste countless hours searching for the best sites and apps, or you could come to the April 9 IWOC meeting and learn from two women who've done the work for you. We'll be at our new meeting site in the Paige Smith room at the Gratz Center, right across the street from the John Hancock Center.

IWOC members Jennifer Lyng Rueff and Betsy Storm will present info about websites and apps that will help you elevate your writing, your business, and your attitude. Subject areas will include social media, research, productivity, and more.

Rueff specializes in health and fitness, sports, and business topics. She also writes personal finance/investing articles, personal profiles, and human interest stories. Her work has appeared in the *Chicago Tribune*, *Next* (an Amer Sport Magazine), *Create*, and other publications. Some of her

work has been translated into Finnish and German.

Rueff has an extensive corporate background. She spent more than ten years with Nabisco, honing her writing skills in sales communications, sales management, and marketing



roles. Before embarking on a freelance career, she was a fundraiser for the University of Notre Dame, where her duties included writing grants for corporate donations.

She holds a bachelors in Business Administration (Marketing) from the University of Notre Dame and a masters in Business Administration (Finance) from Seton Hall University.

Betsy Storm is the principal of Top-Drawer Communications, a Chicago-based enterprise that helps organizations, businesses, and individuals communicate with a variety of audiences to enhance their images, reputations, and visibility.

Prior to establishing Top-Drawer Communications in 2007, Storm spent more than 20 years as a writer/editor and PR professional for a range of organizations including Chicago's

Northwestern Memorial Hospital and the Anixter Center. Her editorial career began in Philadelphia with a start-up of a new business magazine. She later moved to New York City as managing editor of a magazine for the advertising industry.

An advocacy campaign that Storm developed and executed for the Anixter Center, a nonprofit that provides ser-

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Officers

President

David Epstein 708/567-9705
president@iwoc.org

Executive Vice President

Betsy Storm 312/421-1510

Treasurer

Nancy Solomon 773/262-8070

Secretary

Jennifer Lyng 773/769-5291

Parliamentarian

Roger Rueff 773/769-5291

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Jim Hodl 773/777-5710

Ann Kepler 773/761-1858

Joel Kinnan 708/366-8573

Catherine Rategan 312/266-8146

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Jim Kepler 773-761-1858

Social Media

Roger Rueff 773/769-5291 chair

Jim Kepler 773/761-1858

Writers' Line

chair open

Karleen McAllester 847/644-2524

Web Site: www.iwoc.org

Roger Rueff, webmaster

webmaster@iwoc.org

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Stet Editor
Joel Kinnan
stet@iwoc.org

Contributors:

David Epstein, Joel Kinnan, Katherine Mikkelsen, Anson Poe, Karen Schwartz

Insights into Ill-twitteracy



Anything can be said in 140 characters or less, but is less truly more? (73 characters, with spaces)

For instance, *War and Peace*. Didn't the title cover it all? Did Tolstoy really need Andrei and Natasha? (104 characters + spaces)

I had chicken pox years ago and read many Hemingway stories, several novels, and *A Moveable Feast* back-to-back. That cured me—of Hemingway. (139 characters + spaces—pushing the limit)

Imagine Hemingway using just 140 characters. The words were true, the spaces were honest, the verbs were active, and it was all good. (134 char + #'s)

But I still had chicken pox. (29 char + #)

Perhaps it is not so important to be Ernest. (45 c+#)

Merriam Webster's *10th Collegiate dictionary* defines twittering as "chirping noises," "a small tremulous intermittent sound (as of birds)". (140 c+#—right on the nose!)

Birds? Or birdbrains? (22 c+#)

Jack Dorsey, co-creator of Twitter, confesses "... the word 'twitter' ... was just perfect. The definition was 'a short burst of inconsequential information,' and 'chirps from birds'. And that's exactly what the product was." (224 c+#—way over the Twitter limit! Shamelessly wordy!!)

To be fair to Twitter, let's note that Shakespeare's Polonius said, "Brevity is the soul of wit." (98 c+#)

Of course, Polonius takes 11 lines just to say that "Hamlet is mad." (69 c+#—

from here on, in place of this awkward "c+#" formulation—and in the interests of brevity—let us use a single term, viz. "lexico-spatial units" (I always wanted to work viz. in somewhere, whatever it means); although "lexico-spatial units" has a lot of characters, it is just one word and sounds more technical and precise)

In checking out the Polonius quote, I found Dorothy Parker's brief remark (or remark on briefs) that "Brevity is the soul of lingerie." (137 lexico-spatial units)

Would that Dorothy Parker were alive today to regale us with her Tweets. Her briefs I would "follow"! (101 lexico-spatial units—oh, what the hell! Let's call them "LSU")

This all started because I heard four people on WBEZ debating the merits and demerits of Twitter. (99 LSU)

One man said that he was forced to use Twitter, but he disliked it for encouraging superficial thinking and our "sound-byte culture." (134 LSU)

Yea verily! (12 LSU)

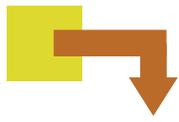
But it's only fair to look at what real people really Tweet. And why? And is it all just trivial chirps? (105 LSU)

So I signed on to my Twitter account. Yes, I have one but hardly ever visit it. You might say I have been tweetering on the edge. (130 LSU)

I only follow ten groups or people, including IWOC, so my home page is somewhat impoverished. (94 LSU)

I don't follow @Cadillac, but I was flattered to be invited to "Watch our live reveal of the all-new 2014 #CTS Tues-

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President's Column

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day, March 26: <http://spr.ly/CTSlive>" (153 LSU—but it's really only 130, since the URL doesn't really count)

I wonder what Dorothy Parker might say about this use of the word "reveal"? (76 LSU)

Seeking to boost my TQ (Twitter Quotient) fast, I searched "kardashians." (74 LSU)

I got this miniature gem: "@KourtneyKardash @KhloeKardashian @KimKardashian I ADORE YOU GUYS SOOOO MUCH PLEASEEEE FOLLOW ME!!!" (128 LSU)

Tragically, this desperate appeal last December 16 has gone unanswered. (72 LSU)

Realizing I was barking up the wrong Kardashian, I searched for @KimKardashian. (80 LSU)

OMG!! Pay dirt!!!! Kim has over 15,000 Tweets, follows 126 people (whom, I wonder?), and has 17,546,515 followers. (I did not join). (133 LSU)

Her latest Tweet (3 hrs ago) is a "reveal": "I never thought I would ever say this... But I'm wearing flats today." (116 LSU)

I cannot bear to repeat any responses from followers. I am still quaking in my (flat) shoes. (93 LSU)

But Kim's Tweets are not devoid of wise advice to followers: "Don't worry about meeting others' expectations, worry about meeting your own." (140 LSU—right on the mark again!) *[Editor's note: But it wouldn't be if she put the apostrophe in "others." Picky, picky.]*

I could not resist looking up @ladygaga. Like Shakespeare's Julius Cae-

sar, she "doth best ride the narrow world. Like a Colossus." (130 LSU)

She dwarfs all Kardashians together, with 2,658 Tweets, 136,438 whom she follows, and 35,415,913 current followers. (116 LSU)

Her page border is illustrated with her face. Her motto is her artistic creed — bold and quotable — but not here. It uses the word "sucks." (136 LSU)

Overwhelmed by showbiz and shunning politics, I turned to an area more relevant to IWOC and searched "writer" and "writing." (125 LSU)

"Writer" immediately turned up this: "Writers aren't people exactly. Or, if they're any good, they're a whole lot of people trying so hard to be one person." (158 LSU—way over the limit, but writers are wordy by profession, so let's dispense with the limit!)

This bit of wisdom comes from Daily Fitzgerald, AKA @fitzaday, which apparently Tweets a daily quotation from F. Scott himself, and it provoked an outpouring of responses. I've become a follower.

I think the most apropos response — not necessarily the most profound — is "we agree, and so do I."

The frequency of Tweets from writers is striking: I counted 6 new ones in 5 minutes, then saw there are now 15—no, make that 22 new Tweets. Perhaps it's not surprising that writers Tweet a lot, but how do they find time for other writing?

Oh, now there are "31 new Tweets" ... and now 58 ... now 63 ... 66 ... I give up! More than 100 within the past hour!

Almost 2 per minute! And I'm already so far behind on reading books and magazines. It's hopeless!

A search for "writing" produces a flood of results, because it turns up every Tweet containing the word "writing." Some are intriguing. The first to catch my eye is Uncreative Writing @UncreativeWriti (I guess there's a length limit for hashtags). This Twitter feed is maintained by one Kenneth Goldsmith at Columbia University Press. Mercifully, he Tweets at most a few times a week. He must have a real job and appears to have taken two weeks off in early March.

Several of the quotations he Tweets are thought-provoking, such as "Innovate only as a last resort." (Charles Eames, he of the famous chair, who was referring to design).

I enjoy the paradox of "The avant-garde is not popular because it is democratic." If someone doesn't care for avant-garde works, does that make him anti-democratic?

I also enjoy the following sequence: "Word processors' can replace writers." (Vilem Flusser, 1983), immediately followed by "Creativity is a jail." And then "Language is pure material." Answered by "Language may be many things but it certainly ain't pure." (RT—who?)

Got curious seeing a feed labeled Copy Writing with hashtag @Copy_writing. Unfortunately, it's all in Japanese (from Kobe). So why an English hashtag?

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Identity Theft Info Sites

If you want to know more about identity theft and recovery therefrom, the FTC has lots of online information as do numerous other websites. For unbiased reporting, look for nonprofit sites. Those with something to sell are less reliable. Here are some FTC sites to check: consumer.ftc.gov/features/feature-0014-identity-theft; consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0235-identity-theft-protection-services; consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0155-free-credit-reports. Contact the nonprofit Identity Theft Resource Center at idtheftcenter.org.

Here's the credit reporting agency info if you want to contact them: Equifax: 1-800-685-1111; equifax.com. Experian: 1-888-397-3742; experian.com. TransUnion: 1-800-916-8800; transunion.com. As we noted elsewhere, you can get three free reports a year by ordering one from a different agency every four months. ■

— The editor

STEPS TO TAKE TO GET YOUR LIFE BACK

Recovering From the Unthinkable: Identity Theft

Like Phoenix rising from the ashes, you can restore your identity if it is stolen. First, to prevent the thief from opening other accounts in your name, ask one of the three credit-reporting companies to put a fraud alert on your credit report. (They're required to alert the other two.) The alert lasts 90 days but you can renew it.

Placing a fraud alert entitles you to free credit reports from all three credit reporting companies. Order them and ask that only the last four digits of your Social Security number will appear on them.

Now you need an Identity Theft Report. First, file a report with the FTC. This becomes an Identity Theft Affidavit. You can use it to: get fraudulent info removed from credit reports; stop companies from collecting debts resulting from the theft or from turning them over to a collection agency; place an ex-

tended fraud alert on your credit reports; and get info from companies about which of your accounts were misused.

With Identity Theft Affidavit in hand, report the identity theft to the police and get a copy of *their* report. Together, these documents constitute an Identity Theft Report.

The preceding will stop further damage and recover your identity, but you'll want to do more, such as changing your bank accounts and credit cards. Also, it's important that you document everything you do. Log telephone calls. You might even want to record them (with permission.) Note the date of each call and the person with whom you spoke along with the phone number.

Keep the originals of all documents and send copies to others who need them. Send copies of your identification in

letters, which you should send by certified mail. Be sure to get a receipt. The idea is to have a verifiable trail for all your hard work. It may take some time to get everything straightened out, but you *can* become *you* again instead of that filthy thief with the bad teeth and a hoodie. ■

— Joen Kinnan

Editor's note: We promised you this info last month, so here it is. We think it's good stuff that you may want to keep just in case, but the truth is that identity theft is relatively rare compared to plain credit-card theft, and we don't want to scare you into shelling out hard cash for a paid service to safeguard your identity. Companies that offer this service exaggerate the threat, and do-it-yourself safeguards are just as effective as paid services. We'll talk about them in next month's issue. ■

Ghostwriting Is No Shadowy Gig: How-To's from Two Savvy Pros

Ghostwriting was the day's topic for March 12th meeting of IWOC, which was held in a new location at the Paige Smith room of the Gratz Center. Attendees were afraid they'd become ghost writers when IWOC treasurer Nancy Solomon took the Lord's name in vain midway through the meeting, but He apparently saw fit to forgive us... this time.

The presenters for the meeting were Jerry DeMuth and Clifford Terry. DeMuth has ghostwritten articles for banking, business, and mortgage publications. He has also written as himself for the *Chicago Sun-Times*, among other publications. Terry, an IWOC member, has ghostwritten speeches and op-ed pieces in various industries, and a book about the first African-American industrial design manager for Sears.



DeMuth, a former IWOCer, spoke first, emphasizing the importance of developing a relationship with a publisher. Getting to know a publication's needs and readership can help you tailor ghostwritten articles to those needs. Once this is accomplished, you can start looking for people who have ideas that might be of interest to the publication. DeMuth advises that half of your job as a ghostwriter will be to act as an editor, taking someone else's ideas and putting them into a coherent, relevant form.

Next, you need to find an angle on the idea that will suit the publication. DeMuth said that he was once assigned to do a profile on an architect for a

press release and spent 45 minutes interviewing the architect before he found a relevant angle for the publication. Since the assigner didn't give DeMuth much in the way of requirements for the article, knowing the publication was invaluable to getting anything useful out of the interview. The article was later also published in the *Sun-Times*, the *Tribune*, and several suburban newspapers.

Knowing the publication is especially important if the person for whom you are ghostwriting doesn't. DeMuth once had a client insist that he shorten an article when he knew he would be submitting the article to a publication that would frown upon a shorter article. He was thus able to convince his client

It may take your subject a while to open up in an interview, so be patient. Be careful with jokes in speeches; they can backfire on delivery.

that the article should be longer, preventing it from being rejected.

Keeping all this in mind, it is important to remember that you are acting as the person for whom you are ghostwriting. Even with all the tailoring you may have to do to meet your publication's requirements, it is important to maintain your subject's voice.

Terry spoke next. His ghostwriting career path was a bit different from DeMuth's, so his toolbox varied. He said a ghostwriter's best friends are a tape recorder, Google, and the ability to listen.

Terry got his start in ghostwriting when he was asked to write a speech for an

acquaintance's daughter's Bat Mitzvah. He simply recorded interviews with the daughter and her siblings and used the information he gleaned to write the speech. Based on his good work,



he soon got a job writing a speech for a man who was being honored by the American-Israeli Chamber of Commerce.

Networking is important. Terry's speechwriting experience eventually landed him gigs writing speeches on energy-pricing for power company executives, despite his lack of experience in the industry. He says there's often no need to know industry jargon to write a good speech, and if you don't know about something, you can Google it. Terry's speechwriting fee is now \$1 per word, so at the average speaking speed of 110-125 words per minute, Terry gets \$2,200 to \$2,500 for a 20-minute speech. By comparison, he received \$7,000 for the book he ghostwrote.

Other important things to remember are that it may take your subject a while to open up in an interview, so be patient. Be careful with jokes, as they can easily backfire. And always ask for a retainer up front.

The meeting was then opened up for a Q&A session. Many questions had to do with how to obtain ghostwriting work. The consensus among the speakers was that networking is the most important factor. Meet people and make it known

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Did you know...



More fun with the origins of phrases that people use all the time without thinking.

In a pickle – (in a difficult position). Shakespeare is often credited with this phrase from *The Tempest*, but the phrasing there referred to being inebriated, which doesn't jibe with its modern meaning. The British meaning of pickle is what we Yanks call relish – a condiment made of chopped up vegetables that goes oh so well with encased, grilled meats. So if you're in a pickle, like the veggies in relish, you're in a state of disarray, at least according to some etymologists.

Five o'clock shadow – (afternoon beard regrowth). In the late 1800s, taking tea was popular with the middle class; they became known as "five o'clocks." Since any proper gentleman would want to look spiffy for the early evening meal, the Gem Safety Razor Company picked up the idea in the 1930s to help hawk its product. "No more 5 O'Clock Shadow – that ugly afternoon beard growth."

Pleased as punch – (really happy). This phrase is unrelated to the drink. Actually, it refers to that wife-beating character *Punch*, from the puppet show "Punch and Judy," who gleefully whacks other characters with a stick while squawking "That's the way to do it!" The play dates from 16th century Italy, but the first reference probably came in 18th century Britain, when William Gifford, in *The Baviad and Maeviad*, (1797) wrote: "Oh! how my fingers itch to pull thy nose! As pleased as Punch, I'd hold it in my gripe." ■

— Katherine Mikkelsen

Zounds! Hackers Strike Cells?

Sad but true, kiddies. Today's smartphones are mini computers that contain all sorts of valuable info, a fact not lost on the data thieves among us. So, tiresome as it is, we need to take steps to secure our cell phones from mobile threats.

1 Lock it. Set it up so the phone requires a PIN when it's turned on. Annoying for you but good defense in case the phone is lost or stolen.

2 Update, update, update. This is inconvenient too, but your cell is incredibly vulnerable unless you're using the latest version of the firmware. Even then, hackers sometimes stay ahead of the game. Though Android phones have been bigger targets, only last



week Apple introduced a security fix for two lockscreen bypass flaws that allowed hackers access to the iPhone. Within a day, they found another flaw.

Once attackers can bypass the password, they can access *anything* on the phone. They can make calls too, which

could lead to some surprising phone bills you won't want to pay.

3 Turn off Bluetooth, GPS, and wireless. Consider disabling these features when you aren't using them. Besides constantly draining your battery as they perform their automatic search functions, they can be routes to placement of malicious content. Also, before you access public wi-fi, think about what other devices could access your phone through it. (See related article on page 7.)

4 Download only trustworthy apps. Research apps and read reviews before you download. Phone apps may be free or cheap, but they can plant spyware, malware, and other unwanted bits of code. Read the list of permissions an app requests before you install it. Does it make sense? You might also want to consider mobile security software. (We'll try to find room to review some good ones next month.)

5 Prepare for the worst. You hope it won't happen, but if your phone were lost or stolen, what damage could someone do? If the answer is "a lot," consider installing a remote wipe app. In the event of phone loss, you can then remotely access your phone through your computer and wipe it clean, returning it to its factory settings. ■

— JPK

There's an App for That!

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1.

vices to people with disabilities, was honored with an Award for Excellence from the Public Relations Society of America in 2004. In 2000, she was a key member of the marketing team at Northwestern Memorial Hospital that received a Golden Trumpet Award from the Publicity Club of Chicago.

A long-time feature writer, her work has been featured in the *Chicago Tribune*, *North Shore Magazine*, *Consumers Digest*, *Brides*, and many other

publications. Storm holds a bachelors in Communications from American University in Washington, D.C. Networking with snacks and beverages begins at 5 p.m., followed by the program at 6:00. The meeting is free for IWOC members. Nonmembers pay \$10 with online pre-registration. Payment is \$15 at the door (First-time visitors can attend for free if they pre-register online.)

All attendees are welcome to join IWOC members at a buy-your-own dinner at a nearby restaurant after the meeting. ■

— Karen Schwartz

Free on-the-go public wi-fi: Are you safe from prying eyes?



Free public wi-fi is ubiquitous in coffee shops, airports, and even in outdoor spaces in some cities. But is it safe to use? Many experts say it isn't, unless you're protected. Here's why:

The operative word here is "public." Everyone else in your location is using the same network you are — including hackers just waiting for you to check your bank balance online — so you could be vulnerable to phishing, malware, and even possible identity theft.

Fiendish hackers sometimes even generate their own strong network signals to lure you into connecting with *their* networks instead of the one you think you've logged into. So, your first line of defense is to know what network you're connecting to. Don't just grab the first strong signal. What else can you do to protect yourself and still take advantage of away-from-home wi-fi?

To be sure you're safe to do *anything* through wi-fi, consider using a virtual private network (VPN). A VPN is a group of computers or discrete networks networked together over a public network: the Internet. Businesses use VPNs to connect to remote offices, and individuals can use them to secure and encrypt their communications when they're using an untrusted public network. You log in and exchange trusted keys with a remote server. Once authenticity is verified, from then on, all your Internet communication is encrypted and secured from prying eyes. Since most VPN providers allow you to use the service on multiple devices, you can use it on your home wi-fi too.

Another bonus: when you're surfing the Internet, you're not Wendy Writer anymore. Your name is "Anonymous." No trail, no unwanted ads, solicitations, etc. You have privacy!

VPNs: Why Use Them?

1. Secure wi-fi website surfing
2. Private, anonymous IP address
3. Use on multiple wi-fi devices
4. Works in many foreign countries
5. Low cost for secure Internet

There are a number of VPN services available, and some of them are free, at least for a limited amount of data. Keep in mind, though, that every time you go on the Internet, you're downloading data — often quite a lot of it — so a free service might not meet your needs.

Not to worry; most VPN providers are relatively inexpensive. For example, privateinternetaccess.com, a PC Magazine editor's choice, costs only \$3.33/month if you buy a year's subscription (\$39.95) or \$6.95/month if you pay monthly.

There are many VPN providers out there, so shop around. Here's what to look for:

1 Protocols. The techie-minded might want to check out what protocols the VPN uses to keep your data safe.

2 Server locations. Does the provider have servers in places you'll be visiting? Check out their foreign locations if you're a globe-trotter.

3 Systems supported. Almost all support Windows, Mac, and Linux, but some also support Android and iOS cell phone operating systems.

4 Free vs. fee. If you're only an occasional wi-fi user, free may work for you, but check out allowed bandwidth usage, connection duration, and transfer times. Then compare prices for what you get.

5 Logging. If you're *really* concerned about privacy, you may want to know what information the VPN provider keeps. Some keep logs, others don't, but a U.S.-based provider could be forced to turn over logs (if they had them) to the government if demanded.

6 Software. Usually, you do have to install software to get a VPN, so you may want to check out reviews to see which is easiest to install and use.

I haven't included info about encryption protocols and other technical details here, but if you want to know more about VPNs, go to <http://compnetworking.about.com/> and start from there.

There are no recommendations for VPN providers either, because the best one for you depends on how you want to use it: light vs. heavy usage; local, U.S., or international; on your cell too; etc.

One last caveat: regardless of whether or not you choose to use a VPN, if your home wi-fi isn't password protected, your wi-fi is open to anyone who wants to use it. You're vulnerable. So go fix it! ■

— Joen Kinnan

President's Column

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So, is Twitter worth “following”? It’s not all trivia. I have seen comments and links to articles and speeches by people whose work I admire, but on Twitter they can only give a brief comment and/or link. There’s no one I can think of whose every casual utterance I want to see, and the percentage of useful Tweets from any one person is probably not high enough for me to “follow” any individual. Following a group or topic is a different and possibly

more productive approach. Then there is Twitter as a marketing tool, but from the Tweets I’ve seen, most people are not selling — or buying — things that interest me.

Clearly, many people find Twitter at least useful, if not addictive. Statistics vary widely, but a quick Google search reveals everything from 400 million Tweets a day (per

mediabistro, January 30, 2013) to a somewhat suspect 2 billion a day (from a company called TweetStats).

Now, here’s a frightening thought — especially if you recall Alfred Hitchcock’s *The Birds*: imagine that these billions of Tweets somehow suddenly became nonstop audible high-pitched chirps. How long before we’d all go GaGa? ■

Ghostwriting . . .

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that you’re interested in ghostwriting work, because you never know who might know someone who needs it. If someone has an idea, suggest yourself to ghostwrite an article about it.

Publications that seem to be written entirely by the editor probably aren’t. These publications might need ghostwriters. They may also have poorly written manuscripts based on marketable ideas that just need ghost editing.

Another good place to look is talent agencies. They might know someone who needs his/her story written. Public relations agents might know about ghost blogging gigs, as many corporate blogs are ghostwritten and done for PR purposes.

Getting credit for ghostwriting work is intrinsically difficult, but it is worth your while to make sure you get some credit. This is particularly important if

you ghostwrite a book, since it is the only way you’ll be listed in the Library of Congress. In many cases, you must play the hitman: take the money and walk away. You may be able to get a LinkedIn recommendation.

Be sure to join IWOC next month. Jennifer Rueff and Betsy Storm will discuss websites and apps that can help you improve your freelancing business. ■

— Anson Poe

In the next issue. . .



- **May meeting:** Best-selling author Melissa Giovagnoli Wilson will talk about “networking,” the successor to networking to grow your biz.
- **President’s column:** You always learn something interesting in this often surprising column.
- Learn about free do-it-yourself identity safeguards. Helpful tips yet to be determined, and much more.

